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# ORTHODOXY:

A LECTURE

BY

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

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The clergy know that I know that they know that they do  
not know.

R. G. INGERSOLL.



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*ONLY AUTHORIZED EDITION.*

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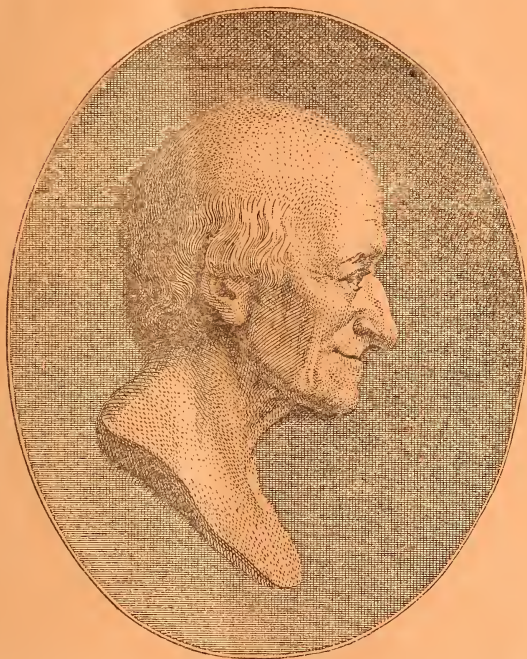
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I choose that a story should be founded on probability, and not always resemble a dream. I desire to find nothing in it trivial or extravagant ; and I desire above all, that under the appearance of fable there may appear some latent truth, obvious to the discerning eye, though it escape the observation of the vulgar. — *Voltaire*.

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# ORTHODOXY.

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It is utterly inconceivable that any man believing in the truth of the Christian religion should publicly deny it, because he who believes in that religion would believe that, by a public denial, he would peril the eternal salvation of his soul. It is conceivable, and without any great effort of the mind, that millions who do not believe in the Christian religion should openly say that they did. In a country where religion is supposed to be in power—where it has rewards for pretense, where it pays a premium upon hypocrisy, where it at least is willing to purchase silence—it is easily conceivable that millions pretend to believe what they do not. And yet I believe it has been charged against myself not only that I was insincere, but that I took the side I am on for the sake of popularity; and the audience to-night goes far towards justifying the accusation.

## Orthodox Religion Dying Out.

It gives me immense pleasure to say to this audience that orthodox religion is dying out of the civilized world. It is a sick man. It has been attacked with two diseases—softening of the brain and ossification of the heart. It is a religion that no longer satisfies the intelligence of this country; that no longer satisfies the brain; a religion against which the heart of every civilized man and woman protests. It is a religion that gives hope only to a few; that puts a shadow upon the cradle; that wraps the coffin in darkness and fills the future of mankind with flame and fear. It is a religion that I am going to do what little I can while I live to destroy. In its place I want humanity, I want good-fellowship, I want intellectual liberty—free lips, the discoveries and inventions of genius, the demon-

strations of science—the religion of art, music and poetry—of good houses, good clothes, good wages—that is to say, the religion of this world.

### Religious Deaths and Births.

We must remember that this is a world of progress, a world of perpetual change—a succession of coffins and cradles. There is perpetual death, and there is perpetual birth. By the grave of the old, forever stand youth and joy; and when an old religion dies, a better one is born. When we find out that an assertion is a falsehood a shining truth takes its place, and we need not fear the destruction of the false. The more false we destroy the more room there will be for the true.

There was a time when the astrologer sought to read in the stars the fate of men and nations. The astrologer has faded from the world, but the astronomer has taken his place. There was a time when the poor alchemist, bent and wrinkled and old, over his crucible endeavored to find some secret by which he could change the baser metals into purest gold. The alchemist has gone; the chemist took his place; and, although he finds nothing to change metals into gold, he finds something that covers the earth with wealth. There was a time when the soothsayer and augur flourished. After them came the parson and the priest; and the parson and the priest must go. The preacher must go, and in his place must come the teacher—the real interpreter of Nature. We are done with the supernatural. We are through with the miraculous and the impossible. There was once the prophet who pretended to read the book of the future. His place has been taken by the philosopher, who reasons from cause to effect—who finds the facts by which we are surrounded and endeavors to reason from these premises and to tell what in all probability will happen. The prophet has gone, the philosopher is here. There was a time when man sought aid from Heaven—when he prayed to the deaf sky. There was a time when everything depended on the supernaturalist. That time in Christendom is passing away. We now depend upon the



naturalist—not upon the believer in ancient falsehoods, but on the discoverer of facts—on the demonstrator of truths. At last we are beginning to build on a solid foundation, and as we progress, the supernatural dies. The leaders of the intellectual world deny the existence of the supernatural. They take from all superstition its foundation.

### **The Religion of Reciprocity.**

Supernatural religion will fade from this world, and in its place we shall have reason. In the place of the worship of something we know not of, will be the religion of mutual love and assistance—the great religion of reciprocity. Superstition must go. Science will remain. The church dies hard. The brain of the world is not yet developed. There are intellectual diseases as well as physical—there are pestilences and plagues of the mind.

Whenever the new comes the old protests, and fights for its place as long as it has a particle of power. We are now having the same warfare between superstition and science that there was between the stage coach and the locomotive. But the stage coach had to go. It had its day of glory and power, but it is gone. It went West. In a little while it will be driven into the Pacific. So we find that there is the same conflict between the different sects and different schools not only of philosophy but of medicine.

Recollect that everything except the demonstrated truth is liable to die. That is the order of Nature. Words die. Every language has a cemetery. Every now and then a word dies and a tombstone is erected, and across it is written "obsolete." New words are continually being born. There is a cradle in which a word is rocked. A thought is married to a sound, and a child-word is born. And there comes a time when the word gets old, and wrinkled, and expressionless, and is carried mournfully to the grave. So in the schools of medicine. You can remember, so can I, when the old allopathists, the bleeders and blisterers, reigned supreme. If there was anything the matter with a man they let out his blood. Called to the bed-side, they took him on the point of a lancet to the edge of eternity, and then prac-

ticed all their art to bring him back. One can hardly imagine how perfect a constitution it took a few years ago to stand the assault of a doctor. And long after the old practice was found to be a mistake, hundreds and thousands of the ancient physicians clung to it, carried around with them, in one pocket a bottle of jalap, and in the other a rusty lancet, sorry that they could not find some patient with faith enough to allow the experiment to be made again.

So these schools, and these theories, and these religions die hard. What else can they do? Like the paintings of the old masters, they are kept alive because so much money has been invested in them. Think of the amount of money that has been invested in superstition! Think of the schools that have been founded for the more general diffusion of useless knowledge! Think of the colleges wherein men are taught that it is dangerous to think, and that they must never use their brains except in the act of faith! Think of the millions and billions of dollars that have been expended in churches, in temples, and in cathedrals! Think of the thousands and thousands of men who depend for their living upon the ignorance of mankind! Think of those who grow rich on credulity and who fatten on faith! Do you suppose they are going to die without a struggle? What are they to do? From the bottom of my heart I sympathize with the poor clegyman that has had all his common sense educated out of him, and is now to be thrown upon the cold and unbelieving world. His prayers are not answered; he gets no help from on high, and the pews are beginning to criticise the pulpit. What is the man to do? If he suddenly changes he is gone. If he preaches what he really believes he will get notice to quit. And yet if he and the congregation would come together and be perfectly honest they would all admit that they believe little and know nothing.

Only a little while ago a couple of ladies were riding together from a revival, late at night, and one said to the other, as they rode along: "I am going to say something that will shock you, and I beg of you never to tell it to anybody else. I am going to tell it to you." "Well, what is

it?" Said she: "I do not believe the Bible." The other replied: "Neither do I."

I have often thought how splendid it would be if the ministers could but come together and say: "Now let us be honest. Let us tell each other, honor bright"—like Dr. Curry, of Chicago, did in the meeting the other day—"just what we believe." They tell a story that in the old time a lot of people, about twenty, were in Texas in a little hotel, and one fellow got up before the fire, put his hands behind him, and said: "Boys, let us all tell our real names." If the ministers and their congregations would only tell their real thoughts they would find that they are nearly as bad as I am, and that they believe as little.

Orthodoxy dies hard, and its defenders tell us that this fact shows that it is of divine origin. Judaism dies hard. It has lived several thousand years longer than Christianity. The religion of Mohammed dies hard. Buddhism dies hard. Why do all these religions die hard? Because intelligence increases slowly.

Let me whisper in the ear of the Protestant: Catholicism dies hard. What does that prove? It proves that the people are ignorant and that the priests are cunning.

Let me whisper in the ear of the Catholic: Protestantism dies hard. What does that prove? It proves that the people are superstitious and the preachers stupid.

Let me whisper in all your ears: Infidelity is not dying—it is growing—it increases every day. And what does that prove? It proves that the people are learning more and more—that they are advancing—that the mind is getting free, and that the race is being civilized.

The clergy know that I know that they know that they do not know.



## **The Blows that have shattered the Shield and shivered the Lance of Superstition.**

---

### **Mohammed.**

Mohammed wrested from the disciples of the Cross the fairest part of Europe. It was known that he was an impostor, and that fact sowed the seeds of distrust and infidelity in the Christian world. Christians made an effort to rescue from the infidels the empty sepulchre of Christ. That commenced in the eleventh century and ended at the close of the thirteenth. Europe was almost depopulated. The fields were left waste, the villages were deserted, nations were impoverished, every man who owed a debt was discharged from payment if he put a cross upon his breast and joined the Crusades. No matter what crime he had committed, the doors of the prison were open for him to join the hosts of the Cross. They believed that God would give them victory, and they carried in front of the first Crusade a goat and a goose, believing that both those animals were blessed by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And I may say that those same animals are in the lead to-day in the orthodox world. Until 1291 they endeavored to gain possession of that sepulchre, and finally the hosts of Christ were driven back baffled and beaten,—a poor, miserable, religious rabble. They were driven back, and that fact sowed the seeds of distrust in Christendom. You know that at that time the world believed in trial by battle—that God would take the side of the right—and there had been a trial by battle between the cross and the crescent, and Mohammed had been victorious. Was God at that time governing the world? Was he endeavoring to spread his gospel?

### **The Destruction of Art.**

You know that when Christianity came into power it destroyed every statute it could lay its ignorant hands upon. It defaced and obliterated every painting; it destroyed every beautiful building; it burned the manuscripts, both Greek and Latin; it destroyed all the history, all the poetry, all the

philosophy it could find, and reduced to ashes every library that it could reach with its torch. And the result was, that the night of the Middle Ages fell upon the human race. But by accident, by chance, by oversight, a few of the manuscripts escaped the fury of religious zeal; and these manuscripts became the seed, the fruit of which is our civilization of to-day. A few statues had been buried; a few forms of beauty were dug from the earth that had protected them, and now the civilized world is filled with art, the walls are covered with paintings, and the niches filled with statuary. A few manuscripts were found and deciphered. The old languages were learned, and literature was again born. A new day dawned upon mankind. Every effort at mental improvement had been opposed by the church, and yet, the few things saved from the general wreck—a few poems, a few works of the ancient thinkers, a few forms wrought in stone, produced a new civilization destined to overthrow and destroy the fabric of superstition.

### **The Discovery of America.**

What was the next blow that this church received? The discovery of America. The Holy Ghost who inspired men to write the Bible did not know of the existence of this Continent, never dreamed of the Western Hemisphere. The Bible left out half the world. The Holy Ghost did not know that the earth is round. He did not dream that the earth is round. He believed it was flat, although he made it himself. At that time heaven was just beyond the clouds. It was there the gods lived, there the angels were, and it was against that heaven that Jacob's ladder leaned when the angels went up and down. It was to that heaven that Christ ascended after his resurrection. It was up there that the New Jerusalem was, with its streets of gold, and under this earth was perdition. There was where the devils lived; where a pit was dug for all unbelievers, and for men who had brains. I say that for this reason: Just in proportion that you have brains, your chances for eternal joy are lessened, according to this religion. And just in proportion that you lack brains your chances are increased. At last they found that the earth is

round. It was circumnavigated by Magellan. In 1519 that brave man set sail. The church told him: "The earth is flat, my friend; don't go, you may fall off the edge." Magellan said: "I have seen the shadow of the earth upon the moon, and I have more confidence in the shadow than I have in the church." The ship went round. The earth was circumnavigated. Science passed its hand above it and beneath it, and where was the old heaven and where was the hell? Vanished forever! And they dwell now only in the religion of superstition. We found there was no place there for Jacob's ladder to lean against; no place there for the gods and angels to live; no place to hold the waters of the deluge; no place to which Christ could have ascended. The foundations of the new Jerusalem crumbled. The towers and domes fell, and in their places infinite space, sown with an infinite number of stars; not with new Jerusalems, but with countless constellations.

### Copernicus and Kepler.

Then man began to grow great, and with that came astronomy. In 1473 Copernicus was born. In 1543 his great work appeared. In 1616 the sytem of Copernicus was condemned by the Pope, by the infallible Catholic Church, and the church was about as near right upon that subject as upon any other. The system of Copernicus was denounced. And how long do you suppose the church fought that? Let me tell you. It was revoked by Pius VII. in the year of grace 1821. For 278 years after the death of Copernicus the church insisted that his system was false, and that the old bible astronomy was true. Astronomy is the first help that we ever received from heaven. Then came Kepler in 1609, and you may almost date the birth of science from the night that Kepler discovered his first law. That was the break of the day. His first law, that the planets do not move in circles but in ellipses; his second law, that they describe equal spaces in equal times; his third law, that the squares of their periodic times are proportional to the cubes of their distances. That man gave us the key to the heavens. He opened the infinite book, and in it read three lines.

I have not time to speak of Galileo, of Leonardo da Vinci,

of Bruno, and of hundreds of others who contributed to the intellectual wealth of the world.

### Special Providence.

The next thing that gave the church a blow was Statistics. We found by taking statistics that we could tell the average length of human life; that this human life did not depend upon infinite caprice; that it depended upon conditions, circumstances, laws and facts, and that these conditions, circumstances, and facts were during long periods of time substantially the same. And now, the man who depends entirely upon special providence gets his life insured. He has more confidence even in one of these companies than he has in the whole Trinity. We found by statistics that there were just so many crimes on an average committed; just so many crimes of one kind and so many of another; just so many suicides, so many deaths by drowning, so many accidents on an average, so many men marrying women, for instance, older than themselves; so many murders of a particular kind; just the same number of mistakes; and I say to-night, statistics utterly demolish the idea of special Providence.

Only the other day a gentleman was telling me of a case of special Providence. He knew it. He had been the subject of it. A few years ago he was about to go on a ship, when he was detained. He did not go, and the ship was lost with all on board. "Yes!" I said, "Do you think the people who were drowned believed in special Providence?" Think of the infinite egotism of such a doctrine. Here is a man that fails to go upon a ship with 500 passengers, and they go down to the bottom of the sea—fathers, mothers, children, and loving husbands and wives waiting upon the shores of expectation. Here is one poor little wretch that did not happen to go! And he thinks that God, the Infinite Being, interfered in his poor little withered behalf and let the rest all go. That is special Providence! Why does special Providence allow all the crimes? Why are the wife-beaters protected, and why are the wives and children left defenceless if the hand of God is over us all? Who protects the insane? Why does Providence permit insanity? But the church cannot give up special Providence. If there is no



such thing, then no prayers, no worship, no churches, no priests. What would become of National Thanksgiving?

You know we have a custom every year of issuing a proclamation of thanksgiving. We say to God, "Although you have afflicted all the other countries, although you have sent war, and desolation, and famine on everybody else, we have been such good children that you have been kind to us, and we hope you will keep on." It does not make a bit of difference whether we have good times or not—the thanksgiving is always exactly the same. I remember a few years ago a Governor of Iowa got out a proclamation of that kind. He went on to tell how thankful the people were and how prosperous the State had been. There was a young fellow in that State who got out another proclamation, saying that he feared the Lord might be misled by official correspondence; that the Governor's proclamation was entirely false; that the State was not prosperous; that the crops had been an almost utter failure; that nearly every farm in the State was mortgaged, and that if the Lord did not believe him, all he asked was that he would send some angel in whom he had confidence, to look the matter over and report.

### Charles Darwin.

This century will be called Darwin's century. He was one of the greatest men who ever touched this globe. He has explained more of the phenomena of life than all of the religious teachers. Write the name of Charles Darwin on the one hand and the name of every theologian who ever lived on the other, and from that name has come more light to the world than from all of those. His doctrine of evolution, his doctrine of the survival of the fittest, his doctrine of the origin of species, has removed in every thinking mind the last vestige of orthodox Christianity. He has not only stated, but he has demonstrated, that the inspired writer knew nothing of this world, nothing of the origin of man, nothing of geology, nothing of astronomy, nothing of nature; that the bible is a book written by ignorance—at the instigation of fear. Think of the men who replied to him. Only a few years

ago there was no person too ignorant to successfully answer Charles Darwin; and the more ignorant he was the more cheerfully he undertook the task. He was held up to the ridicule, the scorn and contempt of the Christian world, and yet when he died, England was proud to put his dust with that of her noblest and her grandest. Charles Darwin conquered the intellectual world, and his doctrines are now accepted facts. His light has broken in on some of the clergy, and the greatest man who to-day occupies the pulpit of one of the orthodox churches, Henry Ward Beecher, is a believer in the theories of Charles Darwin—a man of more genius than all the clergy of that entire church put together.

And yet we are told in this little creed that orthodox religion is about to conquer the world! It will be driven to the wilds of Africa. It must go to some savage country; it has lost its hold upon civilization. It is unfortunate to have a religion that cannot be accepted by the intellect of a nation. It is unfortunate to have a religion against which every good and noble heart protests. Let us have a good religion or none. My pity has been excited by seeing these ministers endeavor to warp and twist the passages of Scripture to fit the demonstrations of science. Of course I have not time to recount all the discoveries and events that have assisted in the destruction of superstition. Every fact is an enemy of the Church. Every fact is a heretic. Every demonstration is an infidel. Everything that ever really happened testifies against the supernatural.

The church teaches that man was created perfect, and that for six thousand years he has degenerated. Darwin demonstrated the falsity of this dogma. He shows that man has for thousands of ages steadily advanced; that the Garden of Eden is an ignorant myth; that the doctrine of original sin has no foundation in fact; that the atonement is an absurdity; that the serpent did not tempt, and that man did not "fall."

Charles Darwin destroyed the foundation of orthodox Christianity. There is nothing left but faith in what we know could not and did not happen. Religion and science are enemies. One is a superstition; the other is a fact.

One rests upon the false, the other upon the true. One is the result of fear and faith, the other of investigation and reason.

### The Creeds.

I have been talking a great deal about the orthodox religion. Often, after having delivered a lecture, I have met some good, religious person who has said to me: "You do not tell it as we believe it." "Well, but I tell it as you have it written in your creed." "Oh, we don't mind the creed any more." "Then, why do you not change it?" "Oh, well, we understand it as it is, and if we tried to change it, maybe we would not agree." Possibly the creeds are in the best condition now. There is a tacit understanding that they do not believe them, that there is a way to get around them, and that they can read between the lines; that if they should meet now to form new creeds they would fail to agree; and that now they can say as they please, except in public. Whenever they do so in public the church, in self-defense, must try them; and I believe in trying every minister that does not preach the doctrine he agrees to. I have not the slightest sympathy with a Presbyterian preacher who endeavors to preach infidelity from a Presbyterian pulpit and receives Presbyterian money. When he changes his views he should step down and out like a man, and say, "I do not believe your doctrine, and I will not preach it. You must hire some other man."

### The Latest Creed.

But I find that I have correctly interpreted the creeds. There was put into my hands the new Congregational creed. I have read it, and I will call your attention to it to-night, to find whether that church has made any advance; to find whether it has been affected by the light of science; to find whether the sun of science has risen in the heavens in vain; whether they are still the children of intellectual darkness; whether they still consider it necessary for you to believe something that you by no possibility can



understand, in order to be a winged angel forever. Now, let us see what their creed is. I will read a little of it.

They commence by saying that they:

*"Believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible."*

They say, now, that there is the one personal God; that he is the maker of the universe and its ruler. I again ask the old question, Of what did he make it? If matter has not existed through eternity, then this God made it. Of what did he make it? What did he use for the purpose? There was nothing in the universe except this God. What had the God been doing for the eternity he had been living? He had made nothing—called nothing into existence; never had had an idea, because it is impossible to have an idea unless there is something to excite an idea. What had he been doing? Why does not the Congregational Church tell us? How do they know about this Infinite Being? And if he is infinite how can they comprehend him? What good is it to believe in something that you know you do not understand, and that you never can understand?

In the Episcopalian creed God is described as follows:

*"There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions."*

Think of that!—without body, parts, or passions. I defy any man in the world to write a better description of nothing. You cannot conceive of a finer word-painting of a vacuum than "without body, parts, or passions." And yet this God, without passions, is angry at the wicked every day; this God, without passions, is a jealous God, whose anger burneth to the lowest hell. This God, without passions, loves the whole human race; and this God, without passions damns a large majority of mankind. This God, without body, walked in the garden of Eden, in the cool of the day.

This God, without body, talked with Adam and Eve. This God, without body, or parts, met Moses upon Mount Sinai, appeared at the door of the tabernacle, and talked with Moses face to face as a man speaketh to his friend. This description of God is simply an effort of the church to describe a something of which it has no conception.

## God as a Governor.

So too, I find the following:

*"We believe that the Providence of God, by which he executes his eternal purposes in the government of the world, is in and over all events."*

Is God the governor of the world? Is this established by the history of nations? What evidence can you find, if you are absolutely honest and not frightened, in the history of the world, that this universe is presided over by an infinitely wise and good God?

How do you account for Russia? How do you account for Siberia? How do you account for the fact that whole races of men toiled beneath the master's lash for ages without recompense and without reward? How do you account for the fact that babes were sold from the arms of mothers—arms that had been reached toward God in supplication? How do you account for it? How do you account for the existence of martyrs? How do you account for the fact that this God allows people to be burned simply for loving him? Is justice always done? Is innocence always acquitted? Do the good succeed? Are the honest fed? Are the charitable clothed? Are the virtuous shielded? How do you account for the fact that the world has been filled with pain, and grief, and tears? How do you account for the fact that people have been swallowed by earthquakes, overwhelmed by volcanoes, and swept from the earth by storms? Is it easy to account for famine, for pestilence and plague if there be above us all a Ruler infinitely good, powerful and wise?

I do not say there is none. I do not know. As I have said before, this is the only planet I was ever on. I live in one of the rural districts of the universe, and do not know about these things as much as the clergy pretend to, but if they know no more about the other world than they do about this, it is not worth mentioning.

How do they answer all this? They say that God "permits" it. What would you say to me if I stood by and saw a ruffian beat out the brains of a child when I had full and perfect power to prevent it? You would say truthfully that I was as bad as the murderer. Is it possible for this

God to prevent it? Then, if he does not he is a fiend; he is no god. But they say he "permits" it. What for? So that we may have freedom of choice. What for? So that God may find, I suppose, who are good and who are bad. Did he not know that when he made us? Did he not know exactly just what he was making? Why should he make those whom he knew would be criminals? If I should make a machine that would walk your streets and take the lives of people you would hang me. And if God made a man whom he knew would commit murder, then God is guilty of that murder. If God made a man knowing that he would beat his wife, that he would starve his children, that he would strew on either side of his path of life the wrecks of ruined homes, then I say the being who knowingly called that wretch into existence is directly responsible. And yet we are to find the Providence of God in the history of nations. What little I have read shows me that when man has been helped, man has done it; when the chains of slavery have been broken, they have been broken by man; when something bad has been done in the government of mankind, it is easy to trace it to man, and to fix the responsibility upon human beings. You need not look to the sky; you need throw neither praise nor blame upon gods; you can find the efficient causes nearer home—right here.

### The Love of God.

What is the next thing I find in this creed?

*"We believe that man was made in the image of God, that he might know, love, and obey God, and enjoy him forever."*

I do not believe that anybody ever did love God, because nobody ever knew anything about him. We love each other. We love something that we know. We love something that our experience tells us is good and great and beautiful. We cannot by any possibility love the unknown. We can love truth, because truth adds to human happiness. We can love justice, because it preserves human joy. We can love charity. We can love every form of goodness that we know, or of which we can conceive, but we cannot love

the infinitely unknown. And how can we be made in the image of something that has neither body, parts, nor passions?

### The Fall of Man.

The Congregational Church has not outgrown the doctrine of "original sin." We are told that:

*"Our first parents, by disobedience, fell under the condemnation of God, and that all men are so alienated from God that there is no salvation from the guilt and power of sin except through God's redeeming power."*

Is there an intelligent man or woman now in the world who believes in the Garden of Eden story? If you find any man who believes it, strike his forehead and you will hear an echo. Something is for rent. Does any intelligent man now believe that God made man of dust, and woman of a rib, and put them in a garden, and put a tree in the midst of it? Was there not room outside of the garden to put his tree, if he did not want people to eat his apples?

If I did not want a man to eat my fruit, I would not put him in my orchard.

Does anybody now believe in the story of the serpent? I pity any man or woman who, in this nineteenth century, believes in that childish fable. Why did Adam and Eve disobey? Why, they were tempted. By whom? The devil. Who made the devil? What did God make him for? Why did he not tell Adam and Eve about this serpent? Why did he not watch the devil, instead of watching Adam and Eve? Instead of turning them out, why did he not keep him from getting in? Why did he not have his flood first, and drown the devil, before he made a man and woman?

And yet, people who call themselves intelligent—professors in colleges and presidents of venerable institutions—teach children and young men that the Garden of Eden story is an absolute historical fact. I defy any man to think of a more childish thing. This God, waiting around Eden—knowing all the while what would happen—having made them on purpose so that it would happen, then does



what? Holds all of us responsible, and we were not there! Here is a representative before the constituency had been born. Before I am bound by a representative I want a chance to vote for or against him; and if I had been there, and known all the circumstances, I should have voted "No!" And yet, I am held responsible.

We are told by the Bible and by the churches that through this fall of man

*"Sin and death entered the world."*

According to this, just as soon as Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit, God began to contrive ways by which he could destroy the lives of his children. He invented all the diseases—all the fevers and coughs and colds—all the pains and plagues and pestilences—all the aches and agonies, the malaria and spores; so that when we take a breath of air we admit into our lungs unseen assassins; and, fearing that some might live too long, even under such circumstances, God invented the earthquake and volcano, the cyclone and lightning, animalcules to infest the heart and brain, so small that no eye can detect—no instrument reach. This was all owing to the disobedience of Adam and Eve!

In his infinite goodness, God invented rheumatism and gout and dyspepsia, cancers, and neuralgia, and is still inventing new diseases. Not only this, but he decreed the pangs of mothers, and that by the gates of love and life should crouch the dragons of death and pain. Fearing that some might, by accident, live too long, he planted poisonous vines and herbs that looked like food. He caught the serpents he had made and gave them fangs and curious organs, ingeniously devised to distil and deposit the deadly drop. He changed the nature of the beasts, that they might feed on human flesh. He cursed a world, and tainted every spring and source of joy. He poisoned every breath of air; corrupted even light, that it might bear disease on every ray; tainted every drop of blood in human veins; touched every nerve, that it might bear the double fruit of pain and joy; decreed all accidents and mistakes that maim and hurt and kill, and set the snares of life-long grief, baited with

present pleasure,—with a moment's joy. Then and there he foreknew and foreordained all human tears. And yet all this is but the prelude, the introduction, to the infinite revenge of the good God. Increase and multiply all human griefs until the mind has reached imagination's farthest verge, then add eternity to time, and you may faintly tell, but never can conceive, the infinite horrors of this doctrine called "The Fall of Man."

### The Atonement.

We are further told that:

*"All men are so alienated from God that there is no alleviation from the guilt and power of sin, except through God's redeeming grace;"*

And that:

*"We believe that the love of God to sinful man has found its highest expression in the redemptive work of his Son, who became man, uniting his divine nature with our human nature in one person; who was tempted like other men and yet without sin, and by his humiliation, his holy obedience, his sufferings, his death on the cross, and his resurrection, became a perfect Redeemer; whose sacrifice of himself for the sins of the world declares the righteousness of God, and is the sole and sufficient ground of forgiveness and of reconciliation with him."*

The absurdity of the doctrine known as "The Fall of Man," gave birth to that other absurdity known as "The Atonement." So that now it is insisted that, as we are rightfully charged with the sin of somebody else, we can rightfully be credited with the virtues of another. Let us leave out of our philosophy both these absurdities. Our creed will read a great deal better with both of them out, and will make far better sense.

Now, in consequence of Adam's sin, everybody is alienated from God. How? Why? Oh, we are all depraved, you know; we all do wrong. Well, why? Is that because we are depraved? No. Why do we make so many mistakes? Because there is only one right way, and there is an almost infinite number of wrong ways; and as long as we are not

perfect in our intellects we must make mistakes. "There is no darkness but ignorance," and alienation, as they call it, from God, is simply a lack of intellect. Why were we not given better brains? That may account for the alienation.

The church teaches that every soul that finds its way to the shore of this world is against God—naturally hates God; that the little dimpled child in the cradle is simply a chunk of depravity. Everybody against God! It is a libel upon the human race; it is a libel upon all the men who have worked for wife and child; upon all mothers who have suffered and labored, wept and worked; upon all the men who have died for their country; upon all who have fought for human liberty. Leave out the history of religion and there is little left to prove the depravity of man.

Everybody that comes is against God! Every soul, they think, is like the wrecked Irishman, who drifted to an unknown island, and as he climbed the shore saw a man and said to him, "Have you a Government here?" The man replied "We have." "Well," said he, "I'm forinst it!"

The church teaches us that such is the attitude of every soul in the universe of God. Ought a god to take any credit to himself for making depraved people? A god that cannot make a soul that is not totally depraved, I respectfully suggest, should retire from the business. And if a god has made us, knowing that we are totally depraved, why should we go to the same being to be "born again?"

### **The Second Birth.**

The church insists that we must be "born again," and that all who are not the subjects of this second birth are heirs of everlasting fire. Would it not have been much better to have made another Adam and Eve? Would it not have been better to change Noah and his people, so that after that a second birth would not have been necessary? Why not purify the fountain of all human life? Why allow the earth to be peopled with depraved and monstrous



beings, each one of whom must be re-made, re-formed, and born again?

And yet, even reformation is not enough. If the man who steals becomes perfectly honest, that is not enough; if the man who hates his fellowman, changes and loves his fellowman, that is not enough; he must go through that mysterious thing called the second birth; he must be born again. He must have faith; he must believe something that he does not understand, and experience what they call "conversion." According to the church, nothing so excites the wrath of God—nothing so corrugates the brows of Jehovah with hatred—as a man relying on his own good works. He must admit that he ought to be damned, and that of the two he prefers it, before God will consent to save him.

I met a man the other day, who said to me, "I am a Unitarian Universalist." "What do you mean by that?" I asked. "Well," said he, "this is what I mean: the Unitarian thinks he is too good to be damned, and the Universalist thinks God is too good to damn him, and I believe them both."

Is it possible that the sacrifice of a perfect being was acceptable to God? Will he accept the agony of innocence for the punishment of guilt? Will he release Barabbas and crucify Christ?

### Inspiration.

What is the next thing in this great creed?

*"We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the record of God's revelation of Himself in the work of redemption; that they were written by men under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit; that they are able to make wise unto salvation; and that they constitute an authoritative standard by which religious teaching and human conduct are to be regulated and judged."*

This is the creed of the Congregational Church; that is, the result reached by a high-joint commission appointed to draw up a creed for their churches; and there we have the statement that the Bible was written "by men under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit."

What part of the Bible? All of it? All of it. And yet what is this Old Testament that was written by an infinitely good God? The being who wrote it did not know the shape of the world he had made; knew nothing of human nature. He commands men to love him, as if one could love upon command. The same God upheld the institution of human slavery; and the church says that the Bible that upholds that institution was written by men under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then I disagree with the Holy Spirit.

This church tells us that men under the guidance of the Holy Spirit upheld the institution of polygamy—I deny it; that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit these men upheld wars of extermination and conquest—I deny it; that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit these men wrote that it was right for a man to destroy the life of his wife if she happened to differ with him on the subject of religion—I deny it. And yet that is the book now upheld in this creed of the Congregational Church.

If the devil had written upon the subject of slavery, which side would he have taken? Let every minister answer. If you knew the devil had written a work on human slavery, in your judgment would he uphold slavery, or denounce it? Would you regard it as any evidence that he ever wrote it, if it upheld slavery? And yet, here you have a work upholding slavery, and you say that it was written by an infinitely good God! If the devil upheld polygamy, would you be surprised? If the devil wanted to kill men for differing with him would you be astonished? If the devil told a man to kill his wife, would you be shocked? And yet, you say, that is exactly what God did. If there be a God, then that creed is blasphemy. That creed is a libel upon him who sits on Heaven's throne. If there be a God, I ask him to write in the book in which my account is kept, that I denied these lies for him.

I do not believe in a slave-holding God; I do not worship a polygamous Holy Ghost, nor a Son who threatens eternal pain; I will not get upon my knees before any being who commands a husband to slay his wife because she expresses her honest thought. Suppose a book should be found old as the Old Testament in which slavery, polygamy

and war are all denounced, would Christians think that it was written by the devil?

Did it ever occur to you that if God wrote the Old Testament, and told the Jews to crucify or kill anybody that disagreed with them on religion, and that this God afterwards took upon himself flesh and came to Jerusalem, and taught a different religion, and the Jews killed him—did it ever occur to you that he reaped exactly what he had sown? Did it ever occur to you that he fell a victim to his own tyranny, and was destroyed by his own hand? Of course I do not believe that any God ever was the author of the Bible, or that any God was ever crucified, or that any God was ever killed, or ever will be, but I want to ask you that question.

Take this Old Testament, then, with all its stories of murder and massacre; with all its foolish and cruel fables; with all its infamous doctrines; with its spirit of caste; with its spirit of hatred, and tell me whether it was written by a good God. If you will read the maledictions and curses of that book, you will think that God, like Lear, had divided heaven among his daughters, and then, in the insanity of despair, had launched his curses on the human race.

And yet, I must say—I must admit—that the Old Testament is better than the New. In the Old Testament, when God had a man dead, he let him alone. When he saw him quietly in his grave he was satisfied. The muscles relaxed, and the frown gave place to a smile. But in the New Testament the trouble commences at death. In the New Testament God is to wreak his revenge forever and ever. It was reserved for one who said, "Love your enemies," to tear asunder the veil between time and eternity and fix the horrified gaze of man upon the gulfs of eternal fire. The New Testament is just as much worse than the Old, as hell is worse than sleep; just as much worse, as infinite cruelty is worse than dreamless rest; and yet, the New Testament is claimed to be a gospel of love and peace.

Is it possible that: "*The Scriptures constitute the authori-*

*tative standard by which religious teaching and human conduct are to be regulated and judged? "*

Are we to judge of conduct by the Old Testament, by the New, or by both? According to the Old, the slaveholder was a just and generous man; a polygamist was a model of virtue. According to the New, the worst can be forgiven and the best can be lost. How can any book be a standard, when the standard itself must be measured by human reason? Is there a standard of a standard? Must not the reason be convinced? and, if so, is not the reason of each man the final arbiter of that man? If he takes a book as a standard, does he so take it because it is to him reasonable? In what way is the human reason to be ignored? Why should a book take its place, unless the reason has been convinced that the book is the proper standard? If this is so, the book rests upon the reason of those who adopt it. Are they to be saved because they act in accordance with their reason, and are others to be damned because they act by the same standard—their reason? No two are alike. Can we demand of all the same result? Suppose the compasses were not constant to the pole—no two compasses exactly alike—would you expect all ships to reach the same harbor?

### **The Reign of Truth and Love.**

I also find in this creed the following :

*" We believe that Jesus Christ came to establish among men the Kingdom of God, the reign of truth and love, of righteousness and peace."*

Well, that may have been the object of Jesus Christ. I do not deny it. But what was the result? The Christian world has caused more war than all the rest of the world beside. Most of the cunning instruments of death have been devised by Christians. All the wonderful machinery by which the life is blown from men, by which nations are conquered and enslaved—all these machines have been born in Christian brains. And yet he came to bring peace, they say; but the Testament says otherwise: "I came not to bring peace, but a sword." And the sword was brought.



What are the Christian nations doing to-day in Europe? Is there a solitary Christian nation that will trust any other? How many millions of Christians are in the uniform of forgiveness, armed with the muskets of love?

There was an old Spaniard on the bed of death, who sent for a priest, and the priest told him that he would have to forgive his enemies before he died. He said, "I have none." "What! no enemies?" "Not one," said the dying man; "I killed the last one three months ago."

How many millions of Christians are now armed and equipped to destroy their fellow-Christians? Who are the men in Europe crying against war? Who wishes to have the nations disarmed? Is it the church? No; the men who do not believe in what they call this religion of peace. When there is a war, and when they make a few thousand widows and orphans; when they strew the plain with dead patriots, Christians assemble in their churches and sing "Te Deum Laudamus." Why? Because he has enabled a few of his children to kill some others of his children. This is the religion of peace—the religion that invented the Krupp-gun, that will hurl a ball weighing two thousand pounds through twenty-four inches of solid steel. This is the religion of peace that covers the sea with men-of-war, clad in mail, in the name of universal forgiveness. This is the religion that drills and uniforms five millions of men to kill their fellows.

### **The Wars it Brought.**

What effect has this religion had upon the nations of the earth? What have the nations been fighting about? What was the Thirty Years' War in Europe for? What was the war in Holland for? Why was it that England persecuted Scotland? Why is it that England persecutes Ireland even to this day? At the bottom of every one of these conflicts you will find a religious question. The religion of Jesus Christ, as preached by his church, causes war, bloodshed, hatred, and all uncharitableness; and why? Because they say a certain belief is necessary to salvation. They do not say, if you behave yourself you will get there; they do not

say, if you pay your debts and love your wife and love your children, and are good to your friends, and your neighbors, and your country, you will get there; that will do you no good; you have got to believe a certain thing. No matter how bad you are, you can instantly be forgiven; and no matter how good you are, if you fail to believe that which you cannot understand, the moment you get to the day of judgment nothing is left but to damn you, and all the angels will shout "hallelujah."

What do they teach to-day? Nearly every murderer goes to heaven; there is only one step from the gallows to God, only one jerk between the halter and heaven. That is taught by this church.

I believe there ought to be a law to prevent the giving of the slightest religious consolation to any man who has been found guilty of murder. Let a Catholic understand that if he imbrues his hands in his brother's blood, he can have no extreme unction. Let it be understood that he can have no forgiveness through the church; and let the Protestant understand that when he has committed that crime the community will not pray him into heaven. Let him go with his victim. The victim, dying in his sins, goes to hell, and the murderer has the happiness of seeing him there. If heaven grows dull and monotonous, the murderer can again give life to the nerve of pleasure by watching the agony of his victim.

The truth is, Christianity has not made friends; it has made enemies. It is not, as taught, the religion of peace, it is the religion of war. Why should a Christian hesitate to kill a man that his God is waiting to damn? Why should a Christian not destroy an infidel who is trying to assassinate his soul? Why should a Christian pity an unbeliever—one who has rejected the bible—when he knows that God will be pitiless forever? And yet we are told, in this creed, that "*we believe in the ultimate prevalence of the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth.*"

What makes you? Do you judge from the manner in which you are getting along now? How many people are being born a year? About fifty millions. How many are you converting a year, really, truthfully? Five or six thousand. I think I have overstated the number. Is orthodox Chris-

tianity on the increase? No. There are a hundred times as many unbelievers in orthodox Christianity as there were ten years ago. What are you doing in the missionary world? How long is it since you converted a Chinaman? A fine missionary religion, to send missionaries with their bibles and tracts to China, but if a Chinaman comes here, mob him, simply to show him the difference between the practical and theoretical workings of the Christian religion. How long since you have had an intelligent convert in India? In my judgment, never; there never has been an intelligent Hindoo converted from the time the first missionary put his foot on that soil; and never, in my judgment, has an intelligent Chinaman been converted since the first missionary touched that shore. Where are they? We hear nothing of them, except in the reports. They get money from poor old ladies, trembling on the edge of the grave, and go and tell them stories, how hungry the average Chinaman is for a copy of the New Testament, and paint the sad condition of a gentleman in the interior of Africa without the works of Dr. McCosh, longing for a copy of *The Princeton Review*,—in my judgment, a pamphlet that would suit a savage. Thus money is scared from the dying and frightened from the old and feeble.

About how long is it before this kingdom is to be established? No one objects to the establishment of peace and good will. Every good man longs for the time when war shall cease. We are all hoping for a day of universal justice—a day of universal freedom—when man shall control himself, when the passions shall become obedient to the intelligent will. But the coming of that day will not be hastened by preaching the doctrines of total depravity and eternal revenge. That sun will not rise the quicker for preaching salvation by faith. The star that shines above that dawn, the herald of that day, is Science not superstition, Reason not religion.

To show you how little advance has been made, how many intellectual bats and mental owls still haunt the temple, still roost above the altar, I call your attention to the fact that the Congregational Church, according to this creed, still believes in the resurrection of the dead, and in their Con-



fession of Faith, attached to the Creed, I find that they also believe in the literal resurrection of the body.

### The Resurrection.

Does anybody believe that, who has the courage to think for himself? Here is a man, for instance, that weighs 200 pounds and gets sick and dies weighing 120; how much will he weigh in the morning of the resurrection? Here is a cannibal, who eats another man; and we know that the atoms you eat go into your body and become a part of you. After the cannibal has eaten the missionary, and appropriated his atoms to himself, and then dies, to whom will the atoms belong in the morning of the resurrection? Could the missionary maintain an action of replevin, and if so, what would the cannibal do for a body? It has been demonstrated, in so far as logic can demonstrate anything, that there is no creation and no destruction in Nature. It has been demonstrated, again and again, that the atoms in us have been in millions of other beings; have grown in the forests and in the grass, have blossomed in flowers, and been in the metals. In other words, there are atoms in each one of us that have been in millions of others; and when we die, these atoms return to the earth, again appear in grass and trees, are again eaten by animals, and again devoured by countless vegetable mouths and turned into wood; and yet this Church, in the nineteenth century, in a council composed of, and presided over by, Professors and Presidents of Colleges and theologians, solemnly tells us that it believes in the literal resurrection of the body. This is almost enough to make one despair of the future—almost enough to convince a man of the immortality of the absurd. They know better. There is not one so ignorant but knows better.

### The Judgment-Day.

And what is the next thing?

*"We believe in a final judgment, the issues of which are everlasting punishment and everlasting life."*

At the final judgment all of us will be there. The thousands,

and millions, and billions, and trillions, and quadrillions that have died will be there. The books will be opened, and each case will be called. The sheep and the goats will be divided. The unbelievers will be sent to the left, while the faithful will proudly walk to the right. The saved, without a tear, will bid an eternal farewell to those who loved them here—to those they loved. Nearly all the human race will go away to everlasting punishment, and the fortunate few to eternal life. This is the consolation of the Congregational Church! This is the hope that dispels the gloom of life!

### Pious Evasions.

When the clergy are caught, they give a different meaning to the words and say the world was not made in seven days. They say "good whiles"—"epochs."

And in this same confession of faith and in this creed they say that the Lord's day is holy—every seventh day. Suppose you lived near the North Pole where the day is three months long. Then which day would you keep? If you could get to the North Pole you could prevent Sunday from ever overtaking you. You could walk around the other way faster than the world could revolve. How would you keep Sunday then? Suppose we invent something that can go 1,000 miles an hour? We can chase Sunday clear around the globe. Is there anything that can be more perfectly absurd than that a space of time can be holy? You might as well talk about a virtuous vacuum. We are now told that the bible is not a scientific book, and that after all we cannot depend on what God said four thousand years ago—that his ways are not as our ways—that we must accept without evidence, and believe without understanding.

I heard the other night of an old man. He was not very well educated, and he got into the notion that he must have reading of the bible and family worship. There was a bad boy in the family, and they were reading the bible by course. In the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians is this passage: "Behold, brethren, I show you a mystery; we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed." This boy had rubbed out the "c" in "changed." So when the old man put on his spec-

tacles, and got down his Bible, he read: "Behold, brethren, I show you a mystery, we shall not all die, but we shall all be hanged." The old lady said, "Father, I don't think it reads that way." He said, "Who is reading this?" "Yes, mother, it says 'hanged,' and, more than that, I see the sense of it. Pride is the besetting sin of the human heart, and if there is anything calculated to take the pride out of a man it is hanging." It is in this way that ministers avoid and explain the discoveries of science.

People ask me, if I take away the bible what are we going to do? How can we get along without the revelation that no one understands? What are we going to do if we have no bible to quarrel about? What are we to do without hell? What are we going to do with our enemies? What are we going to do with the people we love but don't like?

### **"No Bible, No Civilization."**

They tell me that there never would have been any civilization if it had not been for this Bible. The Jews had a Bible; the Romans had not. Which had the greater and the grander government? Let us be honest. Which of those nations produced the greatest poets, the greatest soldiers, the greatest orators, the greatest statesmen, the greatest sculptors? Rome had no Bible. God cared nothing for the Roman Empire. He let the men come up by chance. His time was taken up with the Jewish people. And yet Rome conquered the world, including the chosen people of God. The people who had the Bible were defeated by the people who had not. How was it possible for Lucretius to get along without the Bible? How did the great and glorious of that empire? And what shall we say of Greece? No Bible. Compare Athens with Jerusalem. From Athens come the beauty and intellectual grace of the world. Compare the mythology of Greece with the mythology of Judea; one covering the earth with beauty, and the other filling heaven with hatred and injustice. The Hindoos had no Bible; they had been forsaken by the Creator, and yet they became the greatest metaphysicians of the world. Egypt had no Bible. Compare Egypt with Judea. What are we

to do without the Bible? What became of the Jews who had a Bible? Their temple was destroyed and their city was taken; and they never found real prosperity until their God deserted them. The Turks attributed all their victories to the Koran. The Koran gave them their victories over the believers in the Bible. The priests of each nation have accounted for the prosperity of that nation by its religion. The Christians mistake an incident for a cause, and honestly imagine that the Bible is the foundation of modern liberty and law. They forget physical conditions, make no account of commerce, care nothing for inventions and discoveries, and ignorantly give the credit to their inspired book.

The foundations of our civilization were laid centuries before christianity was known. The intelligence of courage, of self-government, of energy, of industry, that uniting made the civilization of this century, did not come alone from Judea, but from every nation of the ancient world.

### Miracles of the New Testament.

There are many things in the New Testament that I cannot accept as true.

I cannot believe in the miraculous origin of Jesus Christ. I believe he was the son of Joseph and Mary; that Joseph and Mary had been duly and legally married; that he was the legitimate offspring of that union. Nobody ever believed the contrary until he had been dead at least 150 years. Neither Matthew, Mark, nor Luke ever dreamed that he was of divine origin. He did not say to either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, or to any one in their hearing, that he was the Son of God, or that he was miraculously conceived. He did not say it. It may be asserted that he said it to John, but John did not write the gospel that bears his name. The angel Gabriel, who, they say, brought the news, never wrote a word upon the subject. The mother of Christ never wrote a word upon the subject. His alleged father never wrote a word upon the subject, and Joseph never admitted the story. We are lacking in the matter of witnesses. I would not believe such a story now. I cannot believe that it happened then. I would not



believe people I know; much less would I believe people I do not know.

At that time Matthew, and Luke believed that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary. And why? They say he descended from David, and in order to show that he was of the blood of David, they gave the genealogy of Joseph. And if Joseph was not his father, why did they not give the genealogy of Pontius Pilate or of Herod? Could they, by giving the genealogy of Joseph, show that he was of the blood of David if Joseph was in no way related to Christ? And yet that is the position into which the christian world is driven. In the New Testament we find that in giving the genealogy of Christ it says, "who was the son of Joseph?" and the church has interpolated the words "as was supposed." Why did they give a supposed genealogy? It will not do. And that is a thing that cannot in any way, by any human testimony, be established.

If it is important for us to know that he was the Son of God, I say, then, that it devolves upon God to give us the evidence. Let him write it across the face of the heavens, in every language of mankind. If it is necessary for us to believe it, let it grow on every leaf next year. No man should be damned for not believing, unless the evidence is overwhelming. And he ought not to be made to depend upon say so, or upon "as was supposed." He should have it directly, for himself. A man says that God told him a certain thing, and he tells me, and I have only his word. He may have been deceived. If God has a message for me he ought to tell it to me, and not to somebody that has been dead four or five thousand years, and in another language.

Besides, God may have changed his mind on many things; he has on slavery, and polygamy at least, according to the church; and yet his church now wants to go and destroy polygamy in Utah with the sword. Why do they not send missionaries there with copies of the Old Testament? By reading the lives of Abraham and Isaac, and Lot, and a few other patriarchs who ought to have been in the penitentiary, maybe they can soften their hearts.



### More Miracles.

There is another miracle I do not believe,—the resurrection. I want to speak about it as we would about any ordinary transaction. In the first place, I do not believe that any miracle was ever performed, and if there was, you cannot prove it. Why? Because it is altogether more reasonable to believe that the people were mistaken about it than that it happened. And why? Because, according to human experience, we know that people will not always tell the truth, and we never saw a miracle ourselves, and we must be governed by our experience; and if we go by our experience, we must say that the miracle never happened—that the witnesses were mistaken.

A man comes into Jerusalem, and the first thing he does is to cure the blind. He lets the light of day visit the night of blindness. The eyes are opened, and the world is again pictured upon the brain. Another man is clothed with leprosy. He touches him and the disease falls from him, and he stands pure, and clean, and whole. Another man is deformed, wrinkled, and bent. He touches him, and throws around him again the garment of youth. A man is in his grave, and he says, "Come forth!" And the man walks in life, feeling his heart throb and his blood going joyously through his veins. They say that actually happened. I do not know.

There is one wonderful thing about the dead people that were raised—we do not hear of them any more. What became of them? If there was a man in this city who had been raised from the dead, I would go to see him to-night. I would say, "Where were you when you got the notice to come back? What kind of country is it? What kind of opening there for a young man? How did you like it? Did you meet there the friends you had lost? Is there a world without death, without pain, without a tear? Is there a land without a grave, and where good-bye is never heard?" Nobody ever paid the slightest attention to the dead who had been raised. They did not even excite interest when they died the second time. Nobody said, "Why, that man is not afraid. He has been

there once. He has walked through the valley of the shadow." Not a word. They pass quietly away.

I do not believe these miracles. There is something wrong somewhere about that business. I may suffer eternal punishment for all this, but I cannot, I do not, believe.

There was a man who did all these things, and there-upon they crucified him. Let us be honest. Suppose a man came into this city and should meet a funeral procession, and say, "Who is dead?" and they should reply, "The son of a widow; her only support." Suppose he should say to the procession, "Halt!" and to the undertaker, "Take out that coffin, unscrew that lid. Young man, I say unto thee, arise!" and the dead should step from the coffin and in a moment afterward hold his mother in his arms. Suppose this stranger should go to your cemetery and find some woman holding a little child in each hand, while the tears fell upon a new-made grave, and he should say to her, "Who lies buried here?" and she should reply, "My husband;" and he should cry, "I say unto thee, oh grave, give up thy dead!" and the husband should rise, and in a moment after have his lips upon his wife's, and the little children with their arms around his neck; do you think that the people of this city would kill him? Do you think any one would wish to crucify him? Do you not rather believe that every one who had a loved one out in that cemetery would go to him, even upon their knees, and beg him to give back their dead? Do you believe that any man was ever crucified who was the master of death?

Let me tell you to-night if there shall ever appear upon this earth the master, the monarch, of death, all human knees will touch the earth. He will not be crucified. All the living who fear death; all the living who have lost a loved one, will bow to him. And yet we are told that this worker of miracles, this man who could clothe the dead dust in the throbbing flesh of life, was crucified. I do not believe that he worked the miracles, I do not believe that he raised the dead, I do not believe that he claimed to be the Son of God. These things were told long

after he was dead; told because the ignorant multitude demanded mystery and wonder; told, because at that time the miraculous was believed of all the illustrious dead. Stories that made Christianity powerful then, weaken it now. He who gains a triumph in a conflict with a devil, will be defeated by science.

There is another thing about these foolish miracles. All could have been imitated. Men could pretend to be blind; confederates could feign sickness, and even death.

It is not very difficult to limp or to hold an arm as though it were paralyzed; or to say that one is afflicted with "an issue of blood." It is easy to say that the son of a widow was raised from the dead, and if you fail to give the name of the son, or his mother, or the time and place where the wonder occurred, it is quite difficult to show that it did not happen.

No one can be called upon to disprove anything that has not apparently been established. I say apparently, because there can be no real evidence in support of a miracle.

How could we prove, for instance, the miracle of the loaves and fishes? There were plenty of other loaves and other fishes in the world. Each one of the five thousand could have had a loaf and a fish with him. We would have to show that there was no other possible way for the people to get the bread and fish except by miracle, and then we are only half through. We must then show that they did, in fact, get enough to feed five thousand people, and that more was left than was had in the beginning.

Of course this is simply impossible. And let me ask, why was not the miracle substantiated by some of the multitude?

Would it not have been a greater wonder if Christ had *created* instead of multiplied the loaves and fishes?

How can we now prove that a certain person more than eighteen hundred years ago was possessed by seven devils?

How was it ever possible to prove a thing like that?

How can it be established that some evil spirits could talk while others were dumb, and that the dumb ones were the hardest to control?

If Christ wished to convince his fellow men by miracles, why did he not do something that could not by any means have been a counterfeit?

Instead of healing a withered arm, why did he not find some man whose arm had been cut off, and make another grow?

If he wanted to raise the dead, why did he not raise some man of importance, some one known to all?

Why did he do his miracles in the obscurity of the village, in the darkness of the hovel?

Why call back to life people so insignificant that the public did not know of their death?

Suppose that in May, 1865, a man had pretended to raise some person by the name of Smith from the dead, and suppose a religion had been founded on that miracle, would it not be natural for people, hundreds of years after the pretended miracle, to ask why the founder of that religion did not raise from the dead Abraham Lincoln, instead of the unknown and obscure Mr. Smith?

How could any man now, in any court, by any known rule of evidence, substantiate one of the miracles of Christ?

Must we believe anything that cannot in any way be substantiated?

If miracles were necessary to convince men eighteen centuries ago, are they not necessary now?

After all, how many men did Christ convince with his miracles? How many walked beneath the standard of the master of Nature?

How did it happen that so many miracles convinced so few? I will tell you. The miracles were never performed. No other explanation is possible.

It is infinitely absurd to say that a man who cured the sick, the halt and blind, raised the dead, cast out devils, controlled the winds and waves, created food and held obedient to his will the forces of the world, was put to death by men who knew his superhuman power and who had seen his wondrous works. If the crucifixion was public, the miracles were private. If the miracles had been public, the crucifixion could not have been. Do away with the miracles, and the superhuman character of Christ is destroyed. He becomes what he really was—a man. Do away with the wonders, and the teachings of Christ cease to be authoritative. They are then worth the reason,



the truth that is in them, and nothing more. Do away with the miracles, and then we can measure the utterances of Christ with the standard of our reason. We are no longer intellectual serfs, believing what is unreasonable in obedience to the command of a supposed god. We no longer take counsel of our fears, of our cowardice, but boldly defend what our reason maintains.

Christ takes his appropriate place with the other teachers of mankind. His life becomes reasonable and admirable. We have a man who hated oppression; who despised and denounced superstition and hypocrisy; who attacked the heartless church of his time; who excited the hatred of bigots and priests, and who rather than be false to his conception of truth, met and bravely suffered even death.

### The Resurrection.

The miracle of the resurrection I do not and cannot believe. If it was the fact, if the dead Christ rose from the grave, why did he not appear to his enemies? Why did he not visit Pontius Pilate? Why did he not call upon Caiaphas, the high priest? upon Herod? Why did he not again enter the temple and end the old dispute with demonstration? Why did he not confront the Roman soldiers who had taken money to falsely swear that his body had been stolen by his friends? Why did he not make another triumphal entry into Jerusalem? Why did he not say to the multitude: "Here are the wounds in my feet, and in my hands, and in my side. I am the one you endeavored to kill, but Death is my slave?" Simply because the resurrection is a myth. It makes no difference with his teachings. They are just as good whether he wrought miracles or not. Twice two are four; that needs no miracle. Twice two are five—a miracle can not help that. Christ's teachings are worth their effect upon the human race. It makes no difference about miracle or wonder. In that day every one believed in the impossible. Nobody had any standing as teacher, philosopher, governor, king, general, about whom there was not supposed to be something miraculous. The earth was covered with the sons and daughters of gods and goddesses.



In Greece, in Rome, in Egypt, in India, every great man was supposed to have had either a god for his father, or a goddess for his mother. They accounted for genius by divine origin. Earth and heaven were at that time near together. It was but a step for the gods from the blue arch to the green earth. Every lake and valley and mountain top was made rich with legends of the loves of gods. How could the early Christians have made converts to a man, among a people who believed so thoroughly in gods—in gods that had lived upon the earth; among a people who had erected temples to the sons and daughters of gods? Such people could not have been induced to worship a man—a man born among barbarous people, citizen of a nation weak and poor and paying tribute to the Roman power. The early christians therefore preached the gospel of a god.

### **The Ascension.**

I cannot believe in the miracle of the ascension, in the bodily ascension of Jesus Christ. Where was he going? In the light shed upon this question by the telescope, I again ask, where was he going? The New Jerusalem is not above us. The abode of the gods is not there. Where was he going? Which way did he go? Of course, that depends upon the time of day he left. If he left in the evening, he went exactly the opposite way from that he would have gone had he ascended in the morning. What did he do with his body? How high did he go? In what way did he overcome the intense cold? The nearest station is the moon, two hundred and forty thousand miles away. Again I ask, where did he go? He must have had a natural body, for it was the same body that died. His body must have been material, otherwise, he would not as he rose have circled with the earth, and he would have passed from the sight of his disciples at the rate of more than a thousand miles per hour.

It may be said that his body was "spiritual." Then what became of the body that died? Just before his ascension we are told that he partook of broiled fish with his disciples. Was the fish "spiritual?"

Who saw this miracle?

They say the disciples saw it. Let us see what they say. Matthew did not think it was worth mentioning. He does not speak of it. On the contrary, he says that the last words of Christ were: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Is it possible that Matthew saw this, the most miraculous of miracles, and yet forgot to put it in his life of Christ? Think of the little miracles recorded by this Saint, and then determine whether it is probable that he witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ.

Mark, says: "So, then, after the Lord had spoken unto them he was received up into Heaven and sat on the right hand of God." This is all he says about the most wonderful vision that ever astonished human eyes, a miracle great enough to have stuffed credulity to bursting; and yet all we have is this one, poor, meagre verse. We know, now, that most of the last chapter of Mark is an interpolation, and as a matter of fact, the author of Mark's gospel said nothing about the ascension one way or the other.

Luke says: "And it came to pass while he blessed them he was parted from them and was carried up into Heaven."

John does not mention it. He gives as Christ's last words this address to Peter: "Follow thou Me." Of course he did not say that as he ascended. It seems to have made very little impression upon him; he writes the account as though tired of the story. He concludes with an impatient wave of the hand.

In the Acts we have another account. A conversation is given not spoken of in any of the others, and we find there two men clad in white apparel, who said: "Ye men of Galilee why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus that was taken up into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven."

Matthew did not see the men in white apparel, did not see the ascension. Mark forgot the entire transaction, and Luke did not think the men in white apparel worth mentioning. John had not confidence enough in the story to repeat it. And yet, upon such evidence, we are bound to believe in the bodily ascension, or suffer eternal pain.

And here let me ask, why was not the ascension in public?

### **Casting out Devils.**

Most of the miracles said to have been wrought by Christ were recorded to show his power over evil spirits. On many occasions, he is said to have "cast out devils"—devils who could speak, and devils who were dumb.

For many years belief in the existence of evil spirits has been fading from the mind, and as this belief grew thin, ministers endeavored to give new meanings to the ancient words. They are inclined now to put "disease" in the place of "devils," and most of them say, that the poor wretches supposed to have been the homes of fiends, were simply suffering from epileptic fits! We must remember that Christ and these devils often conversed together. Is it possible that fits can talk? These devils often admitted that Christ was God. Can epilepsy certify to divinity? On one occasion the fits told their name, and made a contract to leave the body of a man provided they would be permitted to take possession of a herd of swine. Is it possible that fits carried Christ himself to the pinnacle of a temple? Did fits pretend to be the owner of the whole earth? Is Christ to be praised for resisting such a temptation? Is it conceivable that fits wanted Christ to fall down and worship them?

The Church must not abandon its belief in devils. Orthodoxy cannot afford to put out the fires of hell. Throw away a belief in the devil, and most of the miracles of the new Testament become impossible, even if we admit the supernatural. If there is no devil, who was the original tempter in the garden of Eden? If there is no hell, from what are we saved; to what purpose is the atonement? Upon the obverse of the christian shield is God, upon the reverse, the devil. No devil, no hell. No hell, no atonement. No atonement, no preaching, no gospel.

### **Necessity of Belief.**

Does belief depend upon evidence? I think it does somewhat in some cases. How is it when a jury is sworn to try a case, hearing all the evidence, hearing both sides, hearing the charge of the Judge, hearing the law, are upon their oaths equally divided, six for the plaintiff and six for the

defendant? Evidence does not have the same effect upon all people. Why? Our brains are not alike. They are not the same shape. We have not the same intelligence, or the same experience, the same sense. And yet I am held accountable for my belief. I must believe in the Trinity—three times one is one, once one is three, and my soul is to be eternally damned for failing to guess an arithmetical conundrum. That is the poison part of Christianity—that salvation depends upon belief. That is the accursed part, and until that dogma is discarded Christianity will be nothing but superstition.

No man can control his belief. If I hear certain evidence I will believe a certain thing. If I fail to hear it I may never believe it. If it is adapted to my mind I may accept it; if it is not, I reject it. And what am I to go by? My brain. That is the only light I have from Nature, and if there be a God it is the only torch that this God has given me to find my way through the darkness and night called life. I do not depend upon hearsay for that. I do not have to take the word of any other man nor get upon my knees before a book. Here in the temple of the mind I consult the God, that is to say my reason, and the oracle speaks to me and I obey the oracle. What should I obey? Another man's oracle? Shall I take another man's word—not what he thinks, but what he says some God has said to him?

I would not know a god if I should see one. I have said before, and I say again, the brain thinks in spite of me, and I am not responsible for my thoughts. I cannot control the beating of my heart. I cannot stop the blood that flows through the rivers of my veins. And yet I am held responsible for my belief. Then why does not God give me the evidence? They say he has. In what? In an inspired book. But I do not understand it as they do. Must I be false to my understanding? They say: "When you come to die you will be sorry if you do not." Will I be sorry when I come to die that I did not live a hypocrite? Will I be sorry that I did not say I was a Christian when I was not? Will



the fact that I was honest put a thorn in the pillow of death? Cannot God forgive me for being honest? They say that when he was in Jerusalem he forgave his murderers, but now he will not forgive an honest man for differing from him on the subject of the Trinity.

They say that God says to me, "Forgive your enemies." I say, "I do;" but he says, "I will damn mine." God should be consistent. If he wants me to forgive my enemies he should forgive his. I am asked to forgive enemies who can hurt me. God is only asked to forgive enemies who cannot hurt him. He certainly ought to be as generous as he asks us to be. And I want no God to forgive me unless I am willing to forgive others, and unless I do forgive others. All I ask, if that be true, is that this God should act according to his own doctrine. If I am to forgive my enemies, I ask him to forgive his. I do not believe in the religion of faith, but of kindness, of good deeds. The idea that man is responsible for his belief is at the bottom of religious intolerance and persecution.

How inconsistent these Christians are! In St. Louis the other day I read an interview with a Christian minister—one who is now holding a revival. They call him the boy preacher—a name that he has borne for fifty or sixty years. The question was whether in these revivals, when they were trying to rescue souls from eternal torture, they would allow colored people to occupy seats with white people; and that revivalist, preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, said he would not allow the colored people to sit with white people; they must go to the back of the church. These same Christians tell us that in heaven there will be no distinction. That Christ cares nothing for the color of the skin. That in Paradise white and black will sit together, swap harps, and cry hallelujah in chorus; yet this minister, believing as he says he does, that all men who fail to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will eternally perish, was not willing that a colored man should sit by a white man and hear the gospel of everlasting peace.



According to this revivalist, the ship of the world is going down; Christ is the only life-boat; and yet he is not willing that a colored man, with a soul to save, shall sit by the side of a white brother, and be rescued from eternal death. He admits that the white brother is totally depraved; that if the white brother had justice done him he would be damned; that it is only through the wonderful mercy of God that the white man is not in hell; and yet such a being, totally depraved, is too good to sit by a colored man! Total depravity becomes arrogant; total depravity draws the color line in religion, and an ambassador of Christ says to the black man, "Stand away; let your white brother hear first about the love of God."

I believe in the religion of humanity. It is far better to love our fellow men than to love God. We can help them. We cannot help him. We had better do what we can than to be always pretending to do what we cannot.

Virtue is of no color; kindness, justice and love, of no complexion.

### **Eternal Punishment.**

Now I come to the last part of this creed—the doctrine of eternal punishment. I have concluded that I will never deliver a lecture in which I will not attack the doctrine of eternal pain. That part of the Congregational creed would disgrace the lowest savage that crouches and crawls in the jungles of Africa. The man who now, in the nineteenth century, preaches the doctrine of eternal punishment, the doctrine of an eternal hell, has lived in vain. Think of that doctrine! The eternity of punishment! I find in this same creed—in this latest utterance of Congregationalism—that Christ is finally going to triumph in this world and establish his kingdom. This creed declares that "we believe in the ultimate prevalence of the kingdom of God over all the earth." If their doctrine is true he will never triumph in the other world. The Congregational church does not believe in the ultimate prevalence of the kingdom of

Christ in the world to come. There, he is to meet with eternal failure. he will have billions in hell forever.

In this world we never will be perfectly civilized as long as a gallows casts its shadow upon the earth. As long as there is a penitentiary, within the walls of which a human being is immured, we are not a perfectly civilized people. We will never be perfectly civilized until we do away with crime. And yet, according to this Christian religion, God is to have an eternal penitentiary; He is to be an everlasting jailor, an everlasting turnkey, a warden of an infinite dungeon, and he is going to keep prisoners there forever, not for the purpose of reforming them—because they are never going to get any better, only worse—but for the purpose of purposeless punishment. And for what? For something they failed to believe in this world. Born in ignorance, supported by poverty, caught in the snares of temptation, deformed by toil, stupefied by want—and yet held responsible through the countless ages of eternity! No man can think of a greater horror; no man can dream of a greater absurdity. For the growth of that doctrine ignorance was soil and fear was rain. It came from the fanged mouths of serpents, and yet it is called “glad tidings of great joy.”

### **Some who are Damned.**

We are told “God so loved the world” that he is going to damn almost everybody. If this orthodox religion be true, some of the greatest, and grandest, and best who ever lived are suffering God’s torments to-night. It does not appear to make much difference with the members of the church. They go right on enjoying themselves about as well as ever. If this doctrine is true, Benjamin Franklin, one of the wisest and best of men, who did so much to give us here a free government, is suffering the tyranny of God to-night, although he endeavored to establish freedom among men. If the churches were honest, their preachers would tell their hearers: “Benjamin Franklin is in hell, and we warn all

the youth not to imitate Benjamin Franklin. Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, with its self-evident truths, has been damned these many years." That is what all the ministers ought to have the courage to say. Talk as you believe. Stand by your creed, or change it. I want to impress it upon your minds, because the thing I wish to do in this world is to put out the fires of hell. I will keep on as long as there is one little red coal left in the bottomless pit. As long as the ashes are warm I shall denounce this infamous doctrine.

I want you to know that according to this creed the men who founded this great and splendid Government are in hell to-night. Most of the men who fought in the Revolutionary War, and wrested from the clutch of Great Britain this continent, have been rewarded by the eternal wrath of God. Thousands of the old Revolutionary soldiers are in torment to-night. Let the preachers have the courage to say so. The men who fought in 1812, and gave to the United States the freedom of the seas, have nearly all been damned. Thousands of heroes who served our country in the civil war, hundreds who starved in prisons, are now in the dungeons of God, compared with which, Andersonville was Paradise. The greatest of heroes are there; the greatest of poets, the greatest scientists, the men who have made the world beautiful—they are all among the damned if this creed is true.

Humboldt, who shed light, and who added to the intellectual wealth of mankind; Goethe, and Schiller, and Lessing, who almost created the German language—all gone—all suffering the wrath of God to-night, and every time an angel thinks of one of those men he gives his harp an extra twang. La Place, who read the heavens like an open book—he is there. Robert Burns, the poet of human love—he is there. He wrote the "Prayer of Holy Willie." He fastened on the cross the Presbyterian creed, and there it is, a lingering crucifixion. Robert Burns increased the tenderness of the human heart. Dickens put a shield of pity before the

flesh of childhood—God is getting even with him. Our own Ralph Waldo Emerson, although he had a thousand opportunities to hear Methodist clergymen, scorned the means of grace, lived to his highest ideal, gave to his fellow men his best and truest thought, and yet his spirit is the sport and prey of fiends to-night.

Longfellow who has refined thousands of homes, did not believe in the miraculous origin of the Savior, doubted the report of Gabriel, loved his fellow-men, did what he could to free the slaves, to increase the happiness of man, yet God was waiting for his soul—waiting to cast him out and down forever. Thomas Paine, author of the "Rights of Man;" offering his life in both hemispheres for the freedom of the human race; one of the founders of this Republic, is now among the damned; and yet it seems to me that if he could only get God's attention long enough to point him to the American flag he would let him out. August Comte, author of the "Positive Philosophy," who loved his fellow-men to that degree that he made of humanity a god, who wrote his great work in poverty, with his face covered with tears—they are getting their revenge on him now.

Voltaire, who abolished torture in France; who did more for human liberty than any other man, living or dead; who was the assassin of superstition, and whose dagger still rusts in the heart of Catholicism—he is with the rest. All the priests who have been translated have had their happiness increased by looking at Voltaire.

Giordano Bruno, the first star of the morning after the long night; Benedict Spinoza, the pantheist, the metaphysician, the pure and generous man; Diderot, the encyclopedist, who endeavored to get all knowledge in a small compass, so that he could put the peasant on an equality intellectually with the prince; Diderot who wished to sow all over the world the seeds of knowledge, and loved to labor for mankind, while the priests wanted to burn; who did all he could to put out the fires—he was lost, long, long ago. His cry for water has



become so common that his voice is now recognized through all the realms of Heaven, and the angels laughing, say to one another, "That is Diderot."

David Hume, the Scotch philosopher, is there, with his inquiry about the "Human Understanding" and his argument against miracles. Beethoven, master of music, and Wagner, the 'Shakespeare of harmony, who made the air of this world rich forever, they are there; and to-night they have better music in hell than in Heaven!

Shelley, whose soul, like his own "Skylark," was a winged joy, has been damned for many, many years; and Shakespeare, the greatest of the human race, who did more to elevate mankind than all the priests who ever lived and died, he is there; but founders of inquisitions, builders of dungeons, makers of chains, inventors of instruments of torture, tearers, and burners, and branders of human flesh, stealers of babes, and sellers of husbands and wives and children, and they who kept the horizon lurid with the fagot's flame for a thousand years—are in Heaven to-night. I wish Heaven joy!

That is the doctrine with which we are polluting the souls of children. That is the doctrine that puts a fiend by the dying bed and a prophecy of hell over every cradle. That is "glad tidings of great joy."

Only a little while ago, when the great flood came upon the Ohio, sent by him who is ruling the world and paying particular attention to the affairs of nations, just in the gray of the morning they saw a house floating down and on its top a human being. A few men went out to the rescue. They found there a woman, a mother, and they wished to save her life. She said: "No, I am going to stay where I am. In this house, I have three dead babes; I will not desert them." Think of a love so limitless—stronger and deeper than despair and death! And yet, the Christian religion says, that if that woman, that mother, did not happen to believe in their creed God would send her soul to eternal fire! If there is another world, and if in heaven they wear hats, when such a woman climbs the opposite bank of the Jordan, Christ should lift his to her.



The doctrine of eternal pain is my trouble with this Christian religion. I reject it on account of its infinite heartlessness. I cannot tell them too often, that during our last war Christians, who knew that if they were shot they would go right to Heaven, went and hired wicked men to take their places, perfectly willing that these men should go to hell provided they could stay at home. You see they are not honest in it, or they do not believe it, or as the people say, "they don't sense it." They have not imagination enough to conceive what it is they believe, and what a terrific falsehood they assert. And I beg of every one who hears me to-night, I beg, I implore, I beseech you, never to give another dollar to build a church in which that lie is preached. Never give another cent to send a missionary with his mouth stuffed with that falsehood to a foreign land. Why, they say, the heathen will go to Heaven, any way, if you let them alone. What is the use of sending them to hell by enlightening them? Let them alone. The idea of going and telling a man a thing that if he does not believe, he will be damned, when the chances are ten to one that he will not believe it, is monstrous. Do not tell him here, and as quick as he gets to the other world and finds it is necessary to believe, he can say "Yes." Give him a chance.

### Another Objection.

My objection to orthodox religion is that it destroys human love, and tells us that the love of this world is not necessary to make a heaven in the next.

No matter about your wife, your children, your brother, your sister—no matter about all the affections of the human heart—when you get there, you will be with the angels. I do not know whether I would like the angels. I do not know whether the angels would like me. I would rather stand by the ones who have loved me and whom I know; and I can conceive of no Heaven without the loved of this earth. That is the trouble with this Christian religion. Leave your father, leave your mother, leave your

wife, leave your children, leave everything and follow Jesus Christ. I will not. I will stay with my people. I will not sacrifice on the altar of a selfish fear all the grandest and noblest promptings of my heart.

Do away with human love, and what are we? What would we be in another world, and what would we be here? Can any one conceive of music without human love? Of art, or joy? Human love builds every home. Human love is the author of all beauty. Love paints every picture, and chisels every statue. Love builds every fire-side. What could Heaven be without human love? And yet that is what we are promised—a Heaven with your wife lost, your mother lost, some of your children gone. And you expect to be made happy by falling in with some angel! Such a religion is infamous.

And how are you to get to this heaven? On the efforts of another. You are to be a perpetual heavenly pauper, and you will have to admit through all eternity that you never would have been there if you had not been frightened. "I am here," you will say, "I have these wings, I have this musical instrument, because I was scared. I am here. The ones who loved me are among the damned; the ones I loved are also there—but I am here, that is enough."

What a glorious world Heaven must be! No reformation in that world—not the slightest. If you die in Arkansas that is the end of you! Think of telling a boy in the next world, who lived and died in Delaware, that he had been fairly treated! Can anything be more infamous?

All on an equality—the rich and the poor, those with parents loving them, those with every opportunity for education, on an equality with the poor, the abject and the ignorant—and this little day called life, this moment, with a hope, a shadow and a tear, this little space between your mother's arms and the grave, balances eternity.

God can do nothing for you when you get there. A Methodist preacher can do more for the soul here than its

creator can there. The soul goes to Heaven, where there is nothing but good society; no bad examples; and they are all there, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and yet they can do nothing for that poor unfortunate except to damn him. Is there any sense in that?

Why should this be a period of probation? It says in the Bible, I believe, "Now is the accepted time." When does that mean? That means whenever the passage is pronounced. "Now is the accepted time." It will be the same to-morrow, will it not? And just as appropriate then as to-day, and if appropriate at any time, appropriate through all eternity.

What I say is this: There is no world—there can be no world—in which every human being will not have the eternal opportunity of doing right.

That is my objection to this Christian religion; and if the love of earth is not the love of Heaven, if those we love here are to be separated from us there, then I want eternal sleep. Give me a good cool grave rather than the furnace of Jehovah's wrath. I pray the angel of the resurrection to let me sleep. Gabriel, do not blow! Let me alone! If, when the grave bursts, I am not to meet the faces that have been my sunshine in this life, let me sleep. Rather than that this doctrine of endless punishment should be true, I would gladly see the fabric of our civilization crumbling fall to unmeaning chaos and to formless dust, where oblivion broods and even memory forgets. I would rather that the Samson of some imprisoned force, released by chance, should so wreck and strand the mighty world that man in stress and strain of want and fear should shudderingly crawl back to savage and barbaric night. I would rather that every planet would in its orbit wheel a barren star!

### What I Believe.

I think it is better to love your children than to love God, a thousand times better, because you can help them, and I am inclined to think that God can get along without you. Certainly we cannot help a being without body, parts, or passions!

I believe in the religion of the family. I believe that the rooftree is sacred, from the smallest fibre held in the soft moist clasp of the earth, to the smallest blossom on the topmost bough that gives its fragrance to the happy air. The family where virtue dwells with love is like a lily with a heart of fire—the fairest flower in all this world. And I tell you God cannot afford to damn a man in the next world who has made a happy family in this. God cannot afford to cast over the battlements of Heaven the man who has a happy home upon this earth. God cannot afford to be un pitying to a human heart capable of pity. God cannot clothe with fire the man who has clothed the naked here; and God cannot send to eternal pain a man who has done something towards improving the condition of his fellow-man. If he can, I had rather go to hell than to heaven and keep the company of such a god.

### Immortality.

They tell me that the next terrible thing I do is to take away the hope of immortality! I do not, I would not, I could not. Immortality was first dreamed of by human love; and yet the church is going to take human love out of immortality. We love, therefore we wish to live. A loved one dies and we wish to meet again; and from the affection of the human heart grew the great oak of the hope of immortality. Around that oak has climbed the poisonous vines of superstition. Theologians, pretenders, soothsayers, parsons, priests, popes, bishops, have taken advantage of that. They have stood by graves and promised Heaven. They have stood by graves and prophesied a future filled with pain. They have erected their toll-gates on the highway of life and have collected money from fear.

Neither the Bible nor the Church gave us the idea of immortality. The Old Testament tells us how we lost immortality, and it does not say a word about another world, from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse in Malachi. There is not in the Old Testament a burial service.



No man in the Old Testament stands by the dead and says, "We will meet again." From the top of Sinai came no hope of another world.

And when we get to the New Testament, what do we find? "They that are accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection of the dead." As though some would be counted unworthy to obtain the resurrection of the dead. And in another place: "Seek for honor, glory, immortality." If you have it, why seek it? And in another place, "God, who alone hath immortality." Yet they tell us that we get our idea of immortality from the Bible. I deny it.

I would not destroy the faintest ray of human hope, but I deny that we got our idea of immortality from the Bible. It existed long before Moses. We find it symbolized through all Egypt, through all India. Wherever man has lived he has made another world in which to meet the lost of this.

The history of this belief we find in tombs and temples wrought and carved by those who wept and hoped. Above their dead they laid the symbols of another life.

We do not know. We do not prophecy a life of pain. We leave the dead with Nature, the mother of us all. Under the bow of hope, under the seven-hued arch, let the dead sleep.

If Christ was in fact God, why did he not plainly say there is another life? Why did he not tell us something about it? Why did he not turn the tear-stained hope of immortality into the glad knowledge of another life? Why did he go dumbly to his death and leave the world in darkness and in doubt? Why? Because he was a man and did not know.

What consolation has the orthodox religion for the widow of the unbeliever, the widow of a good, brave, kind man? What can the orthodox minister say to relieve the bursting heart of that woman? What can he say to relieve the aching hearts of the orphans as they kneel by the grave of that father, if that father did not happen to be an orthodox Christian? What consolation

have they? When a Christian loses a friend the tears spring from his eyes as quickly as from the eyes of others. Their tears are as bitter as ours. Why? The echoes of the words spoken eighteen hundred years ago are so low, and the sounds of the clods upon the coffin are so loud; the promises are so far away, and the dead are so near.

We do not know, we cannot say, whether death is a wall or a door; the beginning or end of a day; the spreading of pinions to soar, or the folding forever of wings; the rise or the set of a sun, or an endless life that brings rapture and love to every one.

### A Fable.

There is the fable of Orpheus and Eurydice. Eurydice had been captured and taken to the infernal regions, and Orpheus went after her, taking with him his harp and playing as he went. When he came to Pluto's realm he began to play, and Sysiphus, charmed by the music, sat down upon the stone that he had been heaving up the side of the mountain for so many years, and which continually rolled back upon him; Ixion paused upon his wheel of fire; Tantalus ceased his vain efforts for water; the daughters of the Danaides left off trying to fill their sieves with water; Pluto smiled, and for the first time in the history of hell the cheeks of the Furies were wet with tears. The god relented, and said, "Eurydice may go with you, but you must not look back." So Orpheus again threaded the caverns, playing as he went, and as he reached the light he failed to hear the footsteps of Eurydice. He looked back, and in a moment she was gone. Again and again Orpheus sought his love. Again and again looked back.

This fable gives the idea of the perpetual effort made by the human mind to rescue truth from the clutch of error.

Some time Orpheus will not look back. Some day Eurydice will reach the blessed light, and at last there will fade from the memory of men the monsters of superstition.









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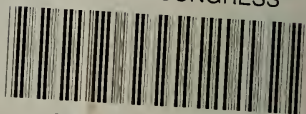
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